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INSIDE

Frazer Briefs Congress on Multilateral Approach to Somalia Crisis



U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer
(Photo credit: AP)

By Jim Fisher-Thompson
Washington File Staff
Writer

Washington -- Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs Jendayi Frazer told Congress June 29 that the U.S. government is working with international partners to address the "incredibly dynamic" security situation in Somalia and that anti-terrorism is one of several goals driving U.S. policy in the Horn region.

Frazer, who returned June 26 from a visit to the Horn of Africa region, made her remarks at a combined hearing of the House Subcommittee on Africa, Global Human Rights and International Operations, chaired by

Representative Chris Smith (Republican of New Jersey) and the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, chaired by Representative Ed Royce (Republican of California).

The former U.S. ambassador to South Africa told lawmakers she co-chaired a June 15 meeting in New York of the newly formed International Somalia Contact Group, established "as a means of greater policy coordination among members of the

(Continued on page 3)

U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Ambassador Vicki Huddleston Donates Over 173,700 Birr for Refugee Assistance Projects

Addis Ababa (U.S. Embassy) -- U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Ethiopia, Ambassador Vicki Huddleston, has granted \$19,977 (over 173,700 Birr) in refugee assistance to the Mother and Child Development Organization (MCDO), the Gaia Association and Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS).

The Mother and Child Development Organization (MCDO), an indigenous organization working to improve the livelihood of impoverished women in the Somali region, will use a \$6,922 (over 60,000 Birr) donation for its anti-Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) campaign, to carry out awareness raising and

training for Kebribeyah camp residents in Somali State, and to support social workers providing psychosocial support to both circumcised and uncircumcised girls. The Gaia Association, which operates in Addis Ababa, Kebribeyah, Shimelba and Bonga refugee

(Continued on page 6)

African issues

Four African Freedom Activists Honored (P 2)

Improved Institutions Seen as Key to Democracy in Africa (P 4)

United States Wants United Nations in Darfur Before 2007 (P 5)

Food for Work Rejuvenates Somalian Community (P 6)

INTERNATIONAL issues

Rice, G8 Ministers Urge Restraint in Israel, Await Iran's Answer (P 7)

North Korean Missile Launch Would Be "Unacceptable," Bush Says (P 8)

U.S. Resisting Deal for Small Agricultural Tariff Cuts at WTO (P 9)

Arab Women Seek Support, Respect As Economic Factors (P 10)

Rewards for Justice Targets al-Qaida in Iraq's New Leader (P 11)

American NEWS

U.S. Independence Day a Civic and Social Event (P 12)

NASA's Discovery First Shuttle To Launch on July 4 (P 13)

U.S. To Issue Redesigned \$5 Note in 2008 (P 14)

HEALTH & ENVIRONMENT issues

USDA Opening Offices in Countries Affected by Bird Flu (P 15)

Human Avian Influenza Follows Seasonal Patterns, U.N. Finds (P 17)

Global Positioning System Can Aid Tsunami Detection (P 18)

Initial Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System Operational (P 19)

ART & CULTURE

Iranian Photographer Documents the World (P 21)

U.S. Exhibit Showcases Australian Aborigine Women's Musings (P 23)

Four African Freedom Activists Honored

By Rachel J. King
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Four African activists -- two men and two women -- were honored with the 2006 Democracy Award of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) on June 27 for their contributions to the advancement of democracy, human rights, gender equality, government transparency and free and fair elections in their homelands.

The NED has presented the Democracy Award nearly each year since 1987 to activists for outstanding achievements, both personal and on behalf of the organizations with which they work. Honorees have demonstrated leadership in working toward democracy and good governance.

This year, all four recipients were selected from nations in sub-Saharan Africa, although in past years recipients also have come from Latin America, Asia and Eastern Europe. The 2006 recipients are Alfred Taban from Sudan, Reginald Matchaba-Hove from Zimbabwe, Zainab Hawa Bangura from Sierra Leone and Immaculée Birhaheka from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). They received their awards at the Cannon House Office Building on Capitol Hill.

"Africa has been witness to more protracted conflicts than any region of the world," said NED Chairman Vin Weber. "The individuals NED honors this year have demonstrated enormous personal courage and optimism, facing down brutal regimes and working in some of the most harrowing circumstances imaginable. If democracy contin-



Photo: The National Endowment for Democracy

ues to advance in Africa, it will be due to the dedication of activists like these."

Taban, a publisher and chairman of Sudan's only independent English-language daily newspaper, the Khartoum Monitor, accepted the award on behalf of the "long-suffering" and "marginalized" people in Darfur.

"With this award, I am going to continue the struggle for a true democratic Sudan," he said.

Matchaba-Hove, chairman of the Zimbabwe Electoral Support Network, has advocated for the provision of basic social services as well as for free and transparent elections in his country.

The activist said the inspiration for his struggle for human rights was American civil rights activist Martin Luther King Jr.

Bangura, a chief civil affairs officer for the U.N. Mission in Liberia, said that it has been a long and frustrating journey toward democracy, but added "our voices have become louder," thanks to the continued effort.

She emphasized, however, that there is still much more to be done to establish democracy throughout Africa.

Birhaheka, president of Promotion and Support of Women's Initiatives -- an organization that she co-founded -- has worked to protect political prisoners and end massive rapes of women and girls in the DRC. She said the award represents more than just an honor for her hard work, but also recognition that there is an international interest in the countries of Africa.

"I see it as an award to the Congolese people," she said. "I also see it as an indication that the NED and the American people are ready to help the Congolese people in their difficult march to democracy."

"These awards recognize the courageous and creative works of these remarkable activists, who have advanced the cause and realized democracy in their homelands," said Under Secretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs Paula Dobriansky.

PRESIDENT BUSH MEETS AWARD RECIPIENTS

Earlier that afternoon, the four honorees met with President Bush in the Oval Office, where they had what Bush called an "amazing" discussion on human rights and democratic principles.

"My spirits are enriched by talking to freedom lovers and freedom fighters," the president said. "We've got a man from the Sudan who talked eloquently about free press. We had a doctor from Zimbabwe who talked about the human condition and the need for the United States to make sure we

(Continued on page 11)

Frazer Briefs Congress on Multilateral Approach . . .

(Continued from page 1)

international community," reacting to a new outbreak of fighting in the Horn nation.

Emphasizing that the U.S. government remains "deeply troubled by the foreign-born terrorists who have found safe haven in Somalia in recent years," Frazer said, "While terrorism is an important issue, it is not the only issue." She said the United States is also focused on governance and institution building, humanitarian assistance for the Somali people and improving regional stability and security.

Frazer told lawmakers the new contact group is concerned with the recent takeover of Mogadishu and other Somali towns by the Islamic Courts Union (ICU), an organization that has reputed ties to al-Qaida and terrorists associated with the 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.

She said the new contact group consists of the African Union (AU), the United Nations, the European Union (EU), the United States, Sweden, Norway, Italy, Tanzania and "others."

Frazer said the group is "united in our goals and strategies" for ending the clan feuding and fighting that has kept Somalia in crisis for the past 15 years. Their next meeting will be held in Sweden on July 7, she said.

She was quick to indicate, however, that this multilateral approach does not mean the United States will drop its support for the Transitional Government and Parliament of Somalia, established as

a result of negotiations by Somali political factions meeting in Kenya in 2004.

Frazer told the subcommittees, "The goals for U.S. policy are clear," and those are to support "the transitional federal institutions in Baidoa" [earlier feuding warlords kept them from settling in Mogadishu], because they "offer the only legitimate framework for governance in Somalia."

The warlords were recently driven out of Mogadishu and several other cities by armed forces established by the ICU with enthusiastic backing from Somalis wearied by years of corruption and mayhem by the various private armies ruling fiefdoms carved out of the remnants of the former Somali state.

Asked by Chairman Royce if she believed the ICU when it denied reports of terrorists operating in Somalia, Frazer acknowledged, "There are elements that are jihadist providing haven for terrorists in Mogadishu."

Chairman Smith also expressed "grave concerns about the Islamic Courts Union's seizure of power in Somalia," but said he thought the creation of the international contact group was "a step in the right direction."

Frazer said the international contact group was "receptive" when the ICU "reached out and indicated their intention to work positively toward a better future for Somalia." She said ICU representatives "indicated they do not intend to be a replacement government" for the transitional federal government in Baidoa.

As a result, she said, the contact group agreed there was "an immediate need for dialogue" between the ICU and the transitional federal government.

"By coordinating common policy objectives and sharing information on political developments in Somalia," Frazer reminded the lawmakers, "the International Somalia Contact Group will become a vehicle to encourage positive developments, while offering support for the implementation of the Somalia Transitional Federal Charter and Transitional Federal Institutions."

John Prendergast, co-director of the International Crisis Group's Africa program, agreed with the formation of the new contact group.

Acknowledging that "extremists, however, have been rapidly consolidating their influence with the courts," he said, "The U.S. government and its international partners should engage with the courts [ICU] in a way that reinforces moderate conduct."

Prendergast said, "First on the agenda for communication with the courts should be its [the contact group's] standing invitation for an international inquiry into its [ICU's] alleged links to terrorism and the suspected presence of al-Qaida suspects in areas under its control."

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Improved Institutions Seen as Key to Democracy in Africa

By Michelle Austein
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Strengthening Africa's institutions will enable the continent to improve its democratization efforts, African activists said at a roundtable discussion in Washington on June 27.

The activists joined U.S. congressmen and Africa experts to discuss the continent's prospects for democracy as part of a panel sponsored by the National Endowment for Democracy.

Building these institutions will take a long time, longer than in most other parts of the world, said Zainab Hawa Bangura, a democracy activist from Sierra Leone who is chief civil affairs officer to the U.N. Mission in Liberia.

Joel Barkan, a senior associate with the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, said the institution-building process takes about 10 to 15 years. "Democracy is about building institutions, not elections," Barkan said. Many other panelists agreed, but also cited the importance of elections in bringing stability to the region and holding leaders accountable.

Ongoing conflicts impede the democratic process as well. In the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), citizens are preparing for their first free and open elections in 40 years on July 30. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=June&x=200606151652252JRgnik0.7322351>).)

Ethnic conflicts and wars make it difficult to include everyone in the electoral process, said Immaculée Birhaheka, a human rights activist from the DRC. Lack of infrastructure such as roads and lack of education also may affect the election. "People 18 to 20 years old are able to vote, but they have never been to school, they are not educated," Birhaheka said.

The DRC's elections should be viewed as "the beginning of the process to put together institutions" in that nation, said Christopher Fomunyoh, regional director for Central and West Africa at the National Democratic Institute, a nongovernmental organization in Washington.

Improving the rule of law in African countries also will improve democratization efforts, said Representative Edward Royce, a Republican from California. Royce said that bringing former Liberian President Charles Taylor to trial for war crimes showed that "justice and rule of law have won a victory in West Africa." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=April&x=20060410171728WCyer0C0.795849>).)

The international community can help Africa through its democratization process through partnerships such as the Millennium Challenge Account (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/mca.html) and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/trade_economic_development/agoa.html), Royce said. Other panelists said nongovernmental organizations, religious groups and

people of African heritage now living elsewhere also provide major assistance.

Poverty, human rights violations and government corruption also were cited as common obstacles to developing democracy in Africa.

Birhaheka and Bangura, along with Sudanese newspaper editor Alfred Taban and Zimbabwean human rights activist Reginald Matchaba-Hove were honored by the National Endowment for Democracy for their efforts to advance democracy and human rights. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=June&x=200606281324442jrgnik6.431216e02>).)

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>.)

United States Wants United Nations in Darfur Before 2007

By Judy Aita
Washington File United Nations
Correspondent

United Nations -- The United States will continue to press for the handover of the African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur to the United Nations before the end of 2006, U.S. Ambassador John Bolton said June 27.

The U.N. target for taking over the peacekeeping operations in Darfur is January 2007, but Bolton said "the handover can and should take place before that."

"In the meantime we will work to strengthen the existing AMIS [African Union Mission in Sudan] mission," he said. "But we think the sooner the U.N. takes control of the mission in Darfur the better."

Bolton spoke with journalists after U.N. Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guéhenno privately briefed the council on his recent assessment mission to Sudan.

Guéhenno said that given the fragility of the situation in Darfur "it would be wise" to have a substantial force on the ground consisting of three brigades of three to five battalions each by January 2007.

In the meantime, he said, the United Nations should immediately strengthen the African Union force with communications, transport and other help such as strengthening command and control capabilities in anticipation of the U.N. takeover. "The situation in Darfur remains very fragile -- there is an agreement and that's a major achievement, but it's an agree-

ment that opens a window and that's a window that needs to be seized," Guéhenno told journalists after the meeting.

A solid military presence could also address the situation in Chad, where allegations by both countries of cross-border incursions are growing increasingly worrisome, he said.

Although Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir has stated that he will not accept a U.N. peacekeeping force, Guéhenno said that the United Nations still can augment the 7,000-strong African Union operation.

"We believe that the United Nations can help the African mission. We did not get any objection from the government of Sudan, so we are going to work in earnest on that," he said.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan said that he will be meeting al-Bashir at an African Union summit on July 1, along with other African leaders. "I hope the collective pressure will make a difference," he said.

Annan said that he also appealed to the Security Council "to bring their collective and individual pressure to bear not just on the Sudanese government to cooperate and support the deployment, but also on the rebels that are outside the agreement to sign the agreement and pressure both parties to implement in good faith what they have agreed to do" in the Abuja peace agreement.

The Darfur Peace Agreement, signed in Abuja, Nigeria, on May 5 between the government of Sudan

and the principal rebel group, the Sudan Liberation Movement, provides for detailed, verifiable steps to disarm and neutralize the Jingaweit and other armed militia groups, and opens the way for economic recovery and integration of the former combatants and people of Darfur into the political process. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/Archive/2006/May/06-121988.html>).)

Bolton said that Guéhenno's briefing "shows how difficult a mission this is going to be, particularly if we don't overcome the opposition from the government in Khartoum as well as trying to find cooperation from the various rebel groups -- those that signed the Darfur peace agreement and those who didn't."

The U.S. ambassador said the African Union's desire to turn the mission over to the United Nations "is unambiguous."

"It is the responsibility of the AU leaders to bring Sudan into compliance with their own commitment under the Darfur peace agreement," Bolton said.

The Sudanese president's position "is obviously contrary to the obligations he undertook in the Darfur peace agreement," Bolton continued. But the Security Council "will try to overcome that first through discussions ... then consider resolutions or what other steps we might take here."

For additional information, see Darfur Humanitarian Emergency (<http://usinfo.state.gov/af/africa/darfur.html>).♦

Food for Work Rejuvenates Somali Community

Ayan Abdi Mohamed is a mother of seven who has lived all her 56 years in Beledweyne, a village in Somalia. She remembers the time before her village was engulfed in tribal fighting. She remembers when she and her children lived peacefully.

Somalia's civil war and unrest changed all that. Ayan had to depend on relatives for help, but their living situation was often no better than her own. It did not take long before her entire family was completely destitute.

"I had to beg for food," she says. "It was so embarrassing that sometimes I felt I should wait to

die rather than go begging. When you beg, you lose people's respect. I lose my dignity. While I was living in such agony, USAID came to assist us."

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supported food assistance to the people of Beledweyne for years after the civil war, and their situation improved tremendously. Recently, USAID has refocused its efforts in the area, replacing food distribution with a food-for-work program that aims to rehabilitate the village's infrastructure.

Ayan was among the first to register for employment through the

new program, and she was encouraged when she realized that she would get paid in food for her work. "Now I am happier. I can work to secure my food and my living situation is improved."

Now the sounds of pounding sorghum and grinding mills have replaced the sound of gunshots in Beledweyne. Young people have traded their guns for hammers and are beginning new lives that are their own.

(Distributed by the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

U.S. Chargé d'Affaires Ambassador Vicki Huddleston Donates . . .

(Continued from page 1)

camps, will use a \$6,555 (almost 57,000 Birr) donation to provide 69 refugee families in the Ke-bribeyah camp with ethanol fuel for a period of one year to improve the lives of women refugees by reducing the amount of time they spend collecting fuel wood. JRS, an international Catholic organization, will use a \$6,500 (over 56,000 Birr) donation to supplement its Refugee Community Center for urban refugees in Addis Ababa with recreational equipment and educational materials. The Center is intended to gainfully occupy recognized urban refugees through informal educational and recreational activities and to provide daycare for children.

The funds for this donation were provided under the auspices of the Ambassadors' Fund for Refugees in Africa, an initiative of the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM). The Ambassadors' Fund helps to fill gaps in on-going refugee support programs that are not already being addressed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and non-governmental organizations in recipient countries.

In 2005, the United States provided an unprecedented \$332 million (over 2.8 billion Birr) in assistance for refugees and conflict victims on the African continent, including over \$179 million (over 1.5 billion Birr) to the UNHCR. This also includes nearly \$52 million

(over 452 million Birr) for activities in the Horn of Africa; of this, over \$4.3 million (over \$37 million Birr) was specifically earmarked for refugee protection and assistance programs in Ethiopia.

U.S. contributions help support a broad range of refugee assistance programs, including, but not limited to, women and child protection, combating sexual and gender based violence (SGBV), HIV/AIDS awareness, and environmental rehabilitation programs in refugee-impacted areas of the country. Such funding benefits refugees from a variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, including Sudanese Christians and Somali Muslims.♦

Rice, G8 Ministers Urge Restraint in Israel, Await Iran's Answer

Washington -- Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and her foreign-minister counterparts within the Group of Eight (G8) have urged restraint in the Israeli-Palestinian confrontation and seek a formal response from Iran by July 5 on proposed nuclear talks.

"It is extremely important that every party act responsibly so that the possibility of peace will be preserved," Rice told reporters in Moscow on June 29 after discussing with other G8 foreign ministers the renewed confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians. Israel on June 28 launched a ground offensive into the Gaza Strip after Palestinian militants kidnapped an Israeli soldier.

Rice said the capture of the Israeli soldier on Israeli territory "began as a terrorist act," but she urged Israeli forces to protect civilians while conducting operations. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2006&m=June&x=20060628165700esnamfuak0.2356836>).)

"This crisis, of course, just underscores the need to have all parties, all Palestinian parties, work for an end to terrorist activities," Rice said. She added that a formal statement issued by the G8 ministers calls on the Palestinian government and other parties to secure the release of the Israeli soldier. "And we are asking Israel to exercise restraint in this circumstance," Rice said, "because with restraint perhaps we can get back to a place where there can be hopes again for a peace process."

Rice said the international community and regional powers are engaged in a "full-scale diplomatic effort" to resolve the crisis. French Foreign Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy said the kidnapped 19-year-old soldier holds dual French-Israeli citizenship. "Violence used by either side will not lead to the stabilization," Douste-Blazy said during a joint news conference.

The foreign ministers met in Moscow to set the stage for the G8 Summit scheduled for July 15-17 in St. Petersburg, Russia. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-eng-lish&y=2006&m=June&x=20060606165502nainawhdaw0.2914698>).)

The G8 nations are Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, which together account for about two-thirds of the world's economic output. (See Group of Eight (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/group_of_8.html).)

MINISTERS AWAIT RESPONSE FROM IRAN ON NUCLEAR PROPOSAL

Rice also affirmed that the international community expects an official response to a diplomatic offer to begin nuclear talks with Iran. The European Union's (EU's) high representative for foreign policy, Javier Solana of Spain, met with his Iranian counterpart June 6 to deliver an international proposal for talks to allow Iran to develop nuclear energy if that nation vows to abandon nuclear weapons development. Senior Iranian authorities

publicly have criticized the proposal, but Ali Larijani, chairman of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, has not yet responded formally. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Jun/20-858807.html>).)

The Iranian proposal is a package of incentives developed by six nations: the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council -- France, Britain, the United States, Russia and China -- plus Germany. The six nations are known as the P-5 + 1. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Jun/05-828881.html>).)

The G8 nations are not involved as group in trying to resolve the Iran nuclear situation, but the G8 foreign ministers issued a statement supporting the position of the P-5 + 1.

"We also affirmed that we expect a response from Iran, an official response," Rice told reporters in Moscow. "We would hope for a serious response. Javier Solana will meet with Mr. Larijani on July 5th. We will then assess where we are."

The G8 ministers have expressed "some disappointment that we have not yet heard from the Iranians on what we consider to be a very favorable offer," Rice said. "The P-5 + 1 will assess the situation when we have heard from the Iranians after Javier's meeting."

Rice said she and other foreign ministers openly discussed concerns about Russia's transition to democracy with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who

(Continued on page 24)

North Korean Missile Launch Would Be "Unacceptable," Bush Says

By Stephen Kaufman and Anita Wadhwani
Washington File Staff Writers

Washington -- The United States and Japan will maintain a united position toward North Korea and will cooperate on missile defense, as well as continuing to dissuade Pyongyang from launching a long-range ballistic missile, President Bush told reporters at the White House June 29.

The president made his comments with Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi, who is making his final visit to the United States as the head of Japan's government.

"We both agreed that it's very important for us to remain united in sending a clear message to the North Korean leader that, first of all, launching the missile is unacceptable. There's been no briefings as to what's on top of the missile. They haven't told anybody where the missile's going," Bush said.

He also said Japan, the United States and other countries "cannot afford to be held hostage to rockets," and the situation has provided an opportunity for the two countries to "share and cooperate on missile defenses."

Prime Minister Koizumi said if the missile were launched, "we would apply various pressures."

He said Japan and the United States "need to maintain close coordination and encourage North Korea to become a responsible member of the international community."

(See The U.S. and the Korean Peninsula (http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/east_asia_pacific/north_korea.html).)

The president and prime minister also discussed the issue of North Korean abductions of foreigners, which Bush said "reminded me about the nature of the regime." He also said both leaders share a "deep concern about the human condition in North Korea."

Bush said he and Koizumi also discussed energy and how to reduce dependence on hydrocarbons, as well as ways to speed up fast breeder nuclear reactors and develop new types of uranium reprocessing. (See Energy Policy (http://usinfo.state.gov/global_issues/energy_policy.html).)

JAPAN'S SUPPORT FOR IRAQ

The president praised Japan's commitment of defense forces to Iraq, which he said was a "hard decision" for the prime minister.

He said Japan "is making a mighty contribution to new democracy," and he praised Japan's contributions to end suffering caused by disease and hunger around the world, saying the prime minister understands that "with ... economic might comes serious responsibilities in the world."

Koizumi said the forces, having accomplished their mission, would be withdrawn, but "through cooperation with various countries concerned and through cooperation with the United Nations, Japan will continue to provide support and help the Iraqis get back on their feet."

(See Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html).)

At an earlier welcoming ceremony for the prime minister, the president also praised Japan's efforts on global security, highlighting its involvement in the Proliferation Security Initiative as well as its participation in the Six-Party Talks to persuade North Korea to abandon its nuclear program.

"The people of Japan can be proud of the contribution their self-defense forces have made in the war on terror, and Americans are proud to serve alongside such courageous allies," Bush said.

He added that the United States and Japan would be working together for a promising end to the World Trade Organization's Doha round of trade talks, which would "help lift millions in the developing world out of poverty." (See USA and the WTO (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/WTO.html).)

Transcripts of the Bush-Koizumi press conference (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/06/20060629-3.html>) and arrival ceremony remarks (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/06/20060629.html>) are available on the White House Web site.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>) ♦

U.S. Resisting Deal for Small Agricultural Tariff Cuts at WTO

By Bruce Odessey
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- As crucial World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations moved on with little evidence of progress, top U.S. officials said they will not accept incremental reductions in agricultural tariffs.

"Suggestions that we need to settle for something less than achieving substantial improvements in market access -- for the sake of having a deal at any cost -- is a clear signal that the WTO is in danger of losing its way," U.S. Trade Representative Susan Schwab said at a June 30 formal WTO meeting in Geneva.

Schwab and Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns are leading the U.S. delegation to the WTO sessions, where the participants remained far apart just six months before negotiations, formally called the Doha Development Agenda, are scheduled to conclude.

If the ministers from more than 30 countries can advance the negotiations before ending their Geneva sessions July 2, they could try to move further during a General Council meeting the last week of July ahead of a monthlong WTO recess.

"We are absolutely committed to this process," Johanns said at a press briefing, "and we remain optimistic that we can have a bold Doha development round."

Schwab said a trade agreement that opens market access through substantial tariff cuts would increase income to developing countries more than all the foreign aid

and proposed debt relief offered by the world's wealthiest countries.

"Creating new trade flows will be the yardstick used to measure our success," she said.

While the United States has offered deep real cuts in domestic support spending on U.S. farmers, Johanns said, no other country has matched the U.S. offer for deep cuts in agricultural tariffs, an average 66 percent for developed countries.

He said a smaller tariff cut proposed by the G20 group of developing countries and an even smaller one proposed by the European Union (EU) would amount to little or no new market access because of a number of product exclusions that would have to be worked out later -- what the WTO calls sensitive products and special products as well as measures called special safeguards to block temporarily a surge of imports.

"There is no way you can determine what market access means if you don't know what sensitive products mean," Johanns said.

Schwab's statement (http://www.ustr.gov/Document_Library/Transcripts/2006/June/State-ment_of_the_US_to_the_Trade_Negotiations_Committee.html) to the Trade Negotiations Committee can be accessed at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative Web site. A transcript (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_10B?contenti-donly=true&contentid=2006/06/0233.xml) of Johanns' briefing and a statement (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_10B?contenti-donly=true&contentid=2006/06/0232.xml) by Schwab and Johanns are accessible at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Web site.

For ongoing coverage, see USA and the WTO (http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/economic_issues/WTO.html).

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Arab Women Seek Support, Respect As Economic Factors

By David Shelby
Washington File Staff Writer

Houston - Women have a tremendous contribution to make to the economies of the Arab world, but they must support each other and need the support of their governments and business communities to achieve their potential, according to Arab businesswomen speaking at a panel on Arab women's empowerment at the U.S.-Arab Economic Forum in Houston June 28.

Kuwait's Sheikha Hissah Al Sabah, president of the Arab Businesswomen's Council said Arab governments and the private sector need to invest in women. She urged governments to provide women entrepreneurs with tax breaks and said banks should offer women no-interest loans and technical training programs.

"Everybody believes they should build a mosque, because building a mosque, you go to heaven," she said. "You build a mosque, ok, fine. But why don't you build a technical school? Why don't you build something else which also will take you to heaven because it does something good for your society."

The panelists agreed that Arab women need to support each other in their professional objectives, but they said there are many ways women can help.

Florence Eid, a senior economist at J.P. Morgan, said that all Arab women have a role to play in advancing women's interests, whether they are entrepreneurs, consultants, corporate executives or academics. She said it is the

task of the Arab women's leadership "to bring all of this into a cohesive whole, such that there is an agenda, there's a program, there's action, and there's implementation."

She praised Sheikha Hissah for her work in building support networks for Arab women entrepreneurs. The panelists said that the mere presence of women in the workplace is not enough. They said women must be taken seriously.

"Hopefully, the presence of women is not just an element of beauty or softness... like having a flower bouquet. We want the woman there as a full participant with a brain that is respected... She is there as a full partner in the process of development," said Thuraya Al Arrayed, a consultant for Saudi Aramco.

Al Arrayed said it is important to send a message to Arab women that they do not have to be bound by stereotypical gender roles.

"Being a woman doesn't mean you have to limit your world to what's in TV shows and ads -- the best cleaner in the kitchen or the bathroom, the softest tissue, the softest bedcovers for your children. There is a side that is more important, and that is to improve women's minds, change their expectations," she said.

She said this does not mean that women should reject traditional roles as wives and mothers. She called the dichotomy between career and family "absolute nonsense," saying women can and should have both. Al Arrayed said in her own experience, she is pleased to have opened possibili-

ties for other women by doing things that had not been done previously.

"Sometimes you come and do something that has not been done, and it shifts how the society will move in the future. Your value comes from that, changing the paradigm," she said. "More than the salary, more than being on the board, more than being a public media figure, more than appearing on television, it's when this mother or father comes to me and says, 'I want my child to be like you.' I think then I have done my job."

The U.S.-Arab Economic Forum was created in 2003 as a means of facilitating communication between the United States and the Arab world.

See also, "U.S.-Arab Economic Forum Confronts Cultural Misunderstandings" (<http://usinfo.state.gov/xarchives/display.html?p=washfile-english&y=2006&m=June&x=20060627112628SDyblehS0.6745569>).

For information on U.S. program's to aid women worldwide, see Middle East Partnership Initiative (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/me_partnership_initiative.html), Women in Iraq (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq/iraq_women.html), and Afghan Women (http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/rebuilding_afghanistan/afghan_women.html).

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Rewards for Justice Targets al-Qaida in Iraq's New Leader

Washington – Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has authorized the Rewards for Justice Program to offer up to \$5 million to encourage individuals to come forward with information concerning the location of Abu Ayyub al-Masri.

Al-Masri is recognized as the new leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, which is responsible for the murder of Iraqi citizens and coalition force members in bombings, kidnappings, and other criminal acts. He replaced the group's former leader, Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi, who was killed in a June 7 coalition air strike. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Jun/12-735280.html>).)

An Egyptian-born explosives expert, al-Masri is believed to have started his terrorist career in 1982 by joining the Islamic Jihad led by Ayman al-Zawahiri, who now is second in command of the broader al-Qaida network. He is believed to have received training in 1999 and 2000 at al-Farouq, a major al-Qaida training camp in Afghanistan.

During a June 15 Baghdad press briefing, U.S. Army Major General William Caldwell said that al-Masri entered Iraq in 2003 to become a senior commander of an organization associated with al-Qaida in Iraq that specialized in recruiting suicide bombers. He subsequently became a close adviser to Zarqawi and senior operational commander responsible for overseeing terrorist attacks across the country's southern provinces. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/Archive/2006/Jun/16-439007.html>).)

Al-Masri, who also uses the alias Abu Hamza al-Muhajir, is believed to have been involved in building suicide bombs used by al-Qaida in Iraq to target the U.N. headquarters and Jordanian Embassy in Baghdad. Al-Masri's bomb-making skills also are thought to be associated with a dozen explosions in Karbala and Baghdad in 2004 as well as attacks against Shi'a religious pilgrims in 2004 and 2005.

Under the Rewards for Justice program, the United States can offer cash awards of up to \$25 million to anyone who can provide credible information leading to the capture of terrorists or information concerning past or planned terrorist attacks. In 2005, the United States paid out \$6 million under the program for information that led to the capture and conviction of terrorists.

(See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/is/Archive/2006/Apr/28-283728.html>).)

Anyone with information on al-Masri's current location should contact the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad, a coalition military commander in Iraq, a U.S. Embassy or consulate in any country, or the Rewards for Justice staff by e-mail at RFJ@state.gov (<mailto:RFJ@state.gov>) or by telephone: 1-800-877-3927.

Additional details are available in a June 30 press statement (<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2006/68526.htm>) from the U.S. Department of State and on the Rewards for Justice (<http://www.rewardsforjustice.net/>) Web site.

For more information, see Iraq Update (http://usinfo.state.gov/mena/middle_east_north_africa/iraq.html).

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Four African Freedom . . .

(Continued from page 2)

stay engaged with the democracy movements and help people who are hungry."

Bush congratulated the recipients for their work in advancing democracy and said he was "proud to be in their company."

"I thank you for being witness to this universal fact that liberty is universal in its application, that people everywhere desire to be free" and that freedom ... belongs not just to American citizens, "freedom belongs to everybody. And you're courageous in your fight and your desire to spread the concept of freedom," the president said.

The NED is a private, nonprofit organization established in 1983 to strengthen democratic institutions. More information (<http://www.ned.org/>) about NED is available on its Web site.

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U.S. Independence Day a Civic and Social Event

By Michael Jay Friedman
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- The United States celebrates its Independence Day on July 4, a day of patriotic celebration and family events throughout the country. In the words of Founding Father John Adams, the holiday would be "the great anniversary festival. It ought to be commemorated as the day of deliverance, It ought to be solemnized with pomp and parade, with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, bonfires, and illuminations, from one end of this continent to the other, from this time forward forever more."

The holiday is a major civic occasion, with roots deep in the Anglo-American tradition of political freedom.

A SUMMER HOLIDAY

Community fireworks displays are common. In New York City, Macy's department store for 30 years has sponsored a July 4 fireworks display. In 2005, the 30-minute show featured 35,000 shells launched from seven barges afloat in the East River and in New York Harbor. The Associated Press estimated that more than 3 million watched in person. The event also has been televised nationally in recent years.

"The Fourth" is a family celebration. Picnics and barbecues are common. July is summer in the United States, and millions of Americans escape the heat at beaches and other vacation spots. Independence Day is not among the legal holidays fixed on a Monday or Friday, but many employees use vacation time to create an ex-

tended weekend, as in 2006, when the holiday occurs on a Tuesday.

Construction of important public works sometimes begins on July 4. The Erie Canal, Washington Monument and Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (the nation's first) all broke ground on Independence Day. The date reflects a desire symbolically to stamp these projects as true civic improvements.

A CIVIC OCCASION

The Fourth of July is a time when elected officials and other public figures often give speeches extolling American traditions and values.

Independence Day has provided some of this nation's most stirring words of freedom. In 1788, Founding Father James Wilson addressed a Philadelphia gathering that was possibly the largest July 4 celebration in the young nation's history. He exhorted his fellow citizens to ratify the proposed Constitution. "What is the object exhibited to our contemplation?" he asked. "A WHOLE PEOPLE exercising its first and greatest power -- performing an act of SOVEREIGNTY, ORIGINAL and UNLIMITED...."

On July 4, 1852, the black journalist and abolitionist Frederick Douglass decried the evils of slavery, still prevalent in the American South at that time, but identified forces "drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American Institutions in operation" that "must inevitably work The downfall of slavery."

Ninety years later, near the darkest moments of World War II, President Franklin D. Roosevelt reminded the nation that July 4 symbolized "the democratic freedom which our citizens claim as their precious birthright." For the "weary, hungry, unequipped Army of the American Revolution," he continued:

the Fourth of July was a tonic of hope and inspiration. So is it now.... The tough, grim men who fight for freedom in this dark hour take heart in its message -- the assurance of the right to liberty under God -- for all peoples and races and groups and nations, everywhere in the world.

On July 4, 2001, President George W. Bush spoke outside Independence Hall, Philadelphia, birthplace of the Declaration of Independence. That document, he said, continues to represent "the standard to which we hold others, and the standard by which we measure ourselves. Our greatest achievements have come when we have lived up to these ideals. Our greatest tragedies have come when we have failed to uphold them."

Across the nation, civic leaders of even the most humble station echo these words, and their audiences give thanks for the freedom and liberties that the founding generation won for all Americans.

For additional information, see July 4th -- Celebrating Independence Day in the United States (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture/holidays/july_4.html).

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NASA's Discovery First Shuttle To Launch on July 4

By Cheryl Pellerin
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Despite two launch attempts cancelled due to bad weather and dissenting views among NASA officials about whether the condition of the external tank's insulating foam allowed for a safe launch, Discovery blasted into the Florida sky July 4, the second shuttle in space since the Columbia accident in 2003.

In what NASA described as "a spectacular display of sound and light befitting of Independence Day," the space shuttle Discovery lifted off from Kennedy Space Center's Launch Pad 39B at 2:37 p.m. EDT (1837 GMT) to begin its high-speed chase to intercept the International Space Station.

Discovery's seven astronauts enjoyed "a smooth ride to orbit," according to NASA, after a launch sequence that proceeded without delay in spite of concerns raised the previous day regarding a crack in a piece of insulating foam.

The crew's mission includes delivering equipment, supplies and an additional crewmember to the station. While docked, the crew will test new equipment and procedures to improve shuttle safety and make repairs to the station, NASA said.

RETURN TO FLIGHT

Discovery returns to the International Space Station with

many improvements, including a redesign of the shuttle external fuel tank's foam insulation, inflight inspection of the shuttle's heat shield, improved imagery during launch, and the ability to launch a shuttle rescue mission if needed, using the space shuttle Atlantis.

This mission, designated STS-121, also will enhance the space station by making a key repair, delivering more than 12,700 kilograms of equipment and supplies and dropping of a third crewmember.

Two spacewalks are planned during Discovery's 12-day mission. If there is enough electrical power, the mission will be extended by one day and a third spacewalk will be added. Shuttle managers hope to make that decision by flight day 6.

As Discovery nears the space station, the shuttle will rotate so the station's crew can photograph its belly to determine whether the shuttle's heat shield, called the thermal protection system, is damaged. This tricky maneuver was

first demonstrated in 2005 with the STS-114 mission.

During the mission's spacewalks, astronauts will test the 50-foot boom extension to the robotic arm as a work platform and remove and replace a cable that provides power, command and data and video connections to the station's mobile transporter rail car. The transporter is used to move a platform containing the station's robotic arm along the truss of the complex.

If there is time and electrical power, the astronauts will test techniques for inspecting and repairing the materials that protect the shuttle's nose cone and wing leading edges.

STS-121 will be NASA's most-photographed mission in shuttle history. More than 100 high-definition, digital, video and film cameras will help managers and engineers assess whether debris comes off the external tank during the shuttle's launch.

Four new video cameras have been added to the solid rocket boosters.

DISSENTING VIEWS

Two days after the June 17 flight readiness review, during which NASA managers decided to launch Discovery even though engineers still expected small pieces of insulating foam to come off the external tank



Image above: Discovery lifts off from Launch Pad 39B at Kennedy Space Center in Florida. Photo credit: NASA

(Continued on page 16)

U.S. To Issue Redesigned \$5 Note in 2008

By Elizabeth Kelleher
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – The U.S. government announced June 29 plans to issue a redesigned \$5 note in 2008 and to follow it with a redesigned \$100 note within months.

The \$5 note redesign is part of an ongoing U.S. effort to stay ahead of increasingly sophisticated counterfeiters, according to a news release issued jointly by the U.S. Treasury's Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the Federal Reserve Board and the U.S. Secret Service.

Genie Foster, cash manager at the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve, said despite earlier announcements that the \$100 note would be the next in a series of notes to be redesigned, recent practices of counterfeiters have caused a change in the schedule.

Foster said that, in a "variation of an older threat," counterfeiters are bleaching the ink off of \$5 notes and reprinting the paper with markings that counterfeit \$100 notes. She said government officials decided that the right solution to stop counterfeiting of \$100 bills would be to fix both the \$5 and \$100 notes.

The Federal Reserve Board distributes currency and coin for the United States, and the Secret Service has jurisdiction over currency crimes. There is roughly \$760 billion in U.S. currency in circulation, and the government estimates that two-thirds of it is overseas, much of it in the form of \$100 bills.

Since 2003, the Federal Reserve has issued new \$20, \$50 and \$10 notes. The new \$5 and \$100

notes will include the same type security features as these earlier releases – shifting ink, a highlighted water mark in an open space and threads embedded in the paper indicating a bill's denomination. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/ei/Archive/2005/Sep/28-259232.html>).)

In 2007, the government will unveil the specifics of the new \$5 design to help banks, consumers, vending machine manufacturers, retailers and other cash-intensive businesses to adjust. "The \$5 note is widely used in a variety of vending, transit farecard and self-service machines," said Bureau of Engraving and Printing Director Larry Felix, in a press release issued June 29. The bureau will be responsible for printing the new notes.

The new \$5 note will particularly affect businesses and consumers in Latin American countries like Panama, El Salvador, and Ecuador, whose currencies are tied to the U.S. dollar.

The new \$100 note will likely affect countries that, while not officially dollarized, have a tremendous amount of U.S. currency circulating, such as Cambodia and Russia.

The U.S. will not recall any notes now in circulation: banks and businesses will continue to honor them. However, there may be times when older notes that come into the Federal Reserve Bank system will be pulled. The \$1 note will not be redesigned.

While overall, counterfeiting of U.S. currency remains at low levels –

less than 1 percent of in circulation is counterfeit, according to officials – the government's policy is to redesign currency every seven to 10 years to "stay ahead of evolving counterfeiting methods," said Michael Lambert, assistant director of Federal Reserve Bank operations.

So, after 2008, with the completion of a several-year revamping of currency notes, the government will start all over again.

The joint news release (<http://www.moneyfactory.gov/newmoney/main.cfm/media/releases06292006>) on the redesign of the \$5 note and additional information on new U.S. currency designs (<http://www.moneyfactory.gov/newmoney/>) are available on the Bureau of Engraving and Printing Web site.

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USDA Opening Offices in Countries Affected by Bird Flu

By Kathryn McConnell and Charlene Porter
Washington File Staff Writers

Washington -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is establishing offices and sending personnel to five Asian countries to fight the international spread of the strain of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) known as H5N1, according to a USDA Pandemic Planning Report released June 29.

In addition to the offices in China, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia -- some shared with offices of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention -- USDA also plans to hire a local national veterinarian dedicated to HPAI activities in Burma, the report said.

The most effective approach to protecting animal and public health from highly pathogenic avian influenza is through active containment of the virus where it currently exists, said U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Mike Johanns in the report.

The strain of bird flu that emerged in Southeast Asia in late 2003 has killed more than 200 million birds through either disease or culling to prevent disease spread. The virus also has killed 130 people, more than half of the total 228 confirmed human infections, most of them after direct contact with sick birds.

Humans have little natural immunity to H5N1 so health officials warn pandemic influenza could break out if the virus develops the capability to pass easily from person to person.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN ANIMAL HEALTH

The U.S. government has pledged \$334 million to the international campaign against avian influenza and pandemic to be used in a variety of activities in areas of both animal and human health.

USDA is collaborating with the Rome-based U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to establish an Emergency Center for Transboundary Animal Diseases Crisis Management Center to coordinate multinational rapid responses to contain and eradicate HPAI, USDA reports. That involves sending some start-up funds for the Crisis Management Center and providing specialists who can take part in rapid response missions to countries experiencing outbreaks.

The efforts are part of a \$21 million "comprehensive program" of international activities USDA is implementing to control the spread of the virus in animals, including sending specialists and resources to countries where they are needed to augment efforts of local governments to combat the disease-causing virus that is causing worldwide concern.

As an example of sharing resources, USDA helped train and deploy an animal health specialist from Senegal to Cameroon earlier in 2006 to augment the capacity of the latter's animal health laboratory during Cameroon's emergency H5N1 eradication efforts.

USDA also is providing workshops to several countries on biosecurity standards and enforcement, undertaking collaborative research on animal diseases and disseminating

information about vaccines, according to the report.

In addition, USDA has provided personnel protective equipment and special packing boxes to all of its overseas offices for the safe transport of suspect avian influenza samples to laboratories for testing.

The international efforts are part of USDA's overall strategy to slow the global spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza and expand an avian influenza early warning system in the United States.

USDA, which is leading the U.S. government's animal health efforts to combat highly pathogenic avian influenza, received \$91.35 million in emergency funding for the current fiscal year for that mission.

PROTECTING HUMAN HEALTH

U.S. human health officials are climbing a steep learning curve as they rush to prepare for the possibility of pandemic influenza, according to a separate report issued by Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) Mike Leavitt June 29.

"We continue to learn how much we have to learn," said Leavitt in the introduction to an HHS report on the nation's progress in pandemic planning over the last six months.

"While we have accomplished much in a short period of time, the race we are in is not a sprint, but a marathon," said Leavitt.

(Continued on page 23)

NASA's Discovery First Shuttle . . .

(Continued from page 13)

during launch, NASA Chief Safety and Mission Assurance Officer Bryan O'Connor and Chief Engineer Chris Scolese issued a statement on the decision to launch despite reservations.

Although saying they believed the crew can return safely from the STS-121 mission, they wrote, "We both feel that there remain issues with the orbiter - there is the potential that foam may come off at time of launch."

That, they added, is "why we feel we should redesign the ice/frost ramp before we fly this mission. We do not feel, however, that these issues are a threat to safe return of the crew."

To prevent foam break-offs in the future, NASA engineers have removed 15.4 kilograms of foam from the external tank's protuberance air load ramp, a structure that prevents unsteady airflow under tank cable trays and pressurization lines. During the 2005 launch, foam was shed from this area.

The next largest sources of foam loss are structures called ice/frost ramps that are made of insulation foam covering 34 brackets that connect piping to the surface of the orange external fuel tank. Each bracket is covered with 0.7 to 1.5 kilograms of foam. The ramps are a potential source of foam loss that could damage the shuttle, but the flight-readiness review board decided the current design is not risky enough to delay the upcoming mission. In the meantime, design improvements for later flights are under way.

"I had spent an awful lot of time on my own studying the issue very carefully," NASA Administrator Michael Griffin said July 2 during a [Fox News Sunday] television interview, "because I knew it was going to be controversial. And my analysis of it convinces me that the chances of damaging the orbiter are quite small, and this is risk worth taking at this time to get us back on track in space."

Even the safety officer and the chief engineer, Griffin added, "agreed that we are not, with this decision, risking crew. The risk is to the vehicle, not the crew, and I felt that it was acceptable to take."

THE MISSION

During the 12-day mission, Discovery's crew will test new hardware and techniques to improve shuttle safety, and deliver supplies and make repairs to the station.

Discovery will transport a third crewmember to the station, European Space Agency Astronaut Thomas Reiter. This will be the station's first three-person crew since the Expedition 6 crew returned to Earth in May 2003.

Without the space shuttle to ferry equipment to the station after the Columbia accident, only two people could be supported onboard until the necessary provisions were in place.

The orbiter will carry the Italian-built multi-purpose logistics module Leonardo, which will carry more than 1.8 metric tons of equipment and supplies.

This will be the fourth trip to the station for Leonardo, the first of three Italian-built modules. Equipment and supplies no longer needed on the station will be moved to Leonardo before it is unberthed on flight day 10 and put back into Discovery's cargo bay for return to Earth.

NEXT STEPS

The next shuttle flight, STS-120, will launch an Italian-built U.S. module for the space station. U.S. Air Force Colonel Pamela Melroy will command the mission. The launch date for that mission, STS-120, has not yet been set.

Melroy, a veteran shuttle pilot, is the second woman to command a shuttle. Marine Corps Colonel George Zamka will serve as pilot.

The flight's mission specialists will be Scott Parazynski, U.S. Army Colonel Douglas Wheelock, U.S. Navy Captain Michael Foreman and Paolo Nespoli, an ESA astronaut from Italy. Zamka, Wheelock, Foreman and Nespoli will be making their first spaceflights.

Additional information (http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/shuttle/main/index.html) about STS-121 mission is available at the NASA Web site, as is a press release (http://www.nasa.gov/home/hqnews/2006/jun/HQ_06242_crew_shuttle_prt.htm) on STS-120.

(The Washington File is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://usinfo.state.gov>)♦

Human Avian Influenza Follows Seasonal Patterns, U.N. Finds

By Charlene Porter
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington – A new study of the incidence of avian influenza in humans suggests that the disease follows the same patterns as seasonal human influenza with an increase in cases during the winter months of the Northern Hemisphere.

That tentative conclusion was issued in the Weekly Epidemiological Record (WER), published June 30 by the World Health Organization (WHO). The study also suggested “an upsurge in cases could be anticipated starting in late 2006 or early 2007.”

In addition, researchers are cautious in qualifying their analysis of the 203 human cases studied, noting those cases represent only those confirmed and reconfirmed in laboratories with samples provided only by patients who presented symptoms of illness. There is no way of knowing, the WER said, whether these cases accurately represent all human cases of infection.

“Some patients may have died before being tested or diagnosed, mildly symptomatic people may not have sought medical care, and false-positive or false-negative test results may have occurred,” according to the article, which recommended further studies of at-risk populations.

This epidemiological study focused on human cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza that occurred between December 2003 and April 2006. Other human cases caused by the dangerous H5N1 viral strain have been confirmed through May

and June, bringing the current tally of human cases to 228, resulting in 130 deaths.

Humans have virtually no immunity to this viral strain, which appeared only in animals prior to 1997. So far, most infections have occurred after a person has had direct contact with diseased birds or their environment, with minimal transmission occurring from human-to-human. If the virus mutates to become contagious among people, international health officials warn that it could trigger a pandemic influenza with the possibility of millions of deaths and widespread social and economic consequences.

The analysis found that the mortality rate in the cases studied was 56 percent overall, but different patterns emerged when the cases were examined by age group.

Young people are more likely to die from H5N1 infection, according to the findings, with a 73 percent fatality rate among those 10 years to 19 years of age. The lowest rate of death – 18 percent -- came in those over 50.

A similar pattern emerged in analysis of the patterns of infection. The median age of confirmed cases was 20 years, and 90 percent of cases occurred among people younger than 40. This finding contrasts with the predictable patterns of seasonal influenza, which takes its highest toll among elderly people.

The vulnerability of younger people has been noted over the months as human infections have grown. The pattern is consistent with the demographic patterns of the Spanish Flu epidemic of the early 20th century in which young adults dis-

proportionately were affected.

The article cautions against inferring a link between age and disease exposure. The cases are occurring in countries where the average age of the populations is low, with a large proportion under 15. Therefore, the occurrence of the disease in the young might say more about population demographics than about the characteristics of the disease.

The activities of the young previously have been cited as a possible explanation for their apparent vulnerability to infection. Children play in yards where chickens are kept, and children often are assigned the role of catching, killing or defeathering the chickens as they are prepared for a family meal.

The contrast between the demographic patterns seen in H5N1 infection and those seen in seasonal influenza has been noted before and is echoed in this latest analysis. It is another aspect of the disease that demands further study.

The disease’s appearance in growing numbers of countries in 2006, increasing the opportunity for human exposure, suggests “that the risk of virus evolving into a more transmissible agent in humans remains high,” according to the report.

The full text (http://www.who.int/csr/don/2006_06_30/en/index.html) of the article is available on the WHO Web site. For additional information about the disease and efforts to combat it, see Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html).♦

Global Positioning System Can Aid Tsunami Detection

Washington – Global Positioning System (GPS) software developed by NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) can determine within minutes whether an earthquake is large enough to generate an oceanwide tsunami, according to a university team of scientists exploring new ways of using the GPS data.

GPS data can determine a large quake's true magnitude within 15 minutes, the team reports, much faster than is possible with other methods. Determination of a quake's actual magnitude is critical to predicting whether a tsunami will be generated, and making that determination rapidly provides additional life-saving moments for authorities to issue alerts to threatened populations.

"Tsunamis travel at jet speed, so warning centers must accurately decide, within minutes, whether to issue alerts," said study co-author Seth Stein, from the Department of Geological Sciences at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. "This has to be done fast enough for the warning to be distributed to authorities in impacted areas so they can implement response plans."

The work led by Geoffrey Blewitt of the Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology and Seismological Laboratory, University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) is described in a June 28 press release from UNR and JPL, developers of the GPS software.

The crushing tsunami of December 2004, caused by a 9.2- or 9.3-magnitude earthquake, has raised global awareness of the need to develop a global tsunami warning

system. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Jul/03-260442.html>).)

The idea that GPS data could be a tool in tsunami warning emerged from GPS measurements examined after the December 2004 event, which showed permanent ground movement of GPS stations -- more than 1 centimeter at a station in India, thousands of kilometers from the Sumatra epicenter.

The new method developed by the Blewitt team works by measuring the time radio signals from GPS satellites arrive at ground stations located in the area surrounding the epicenter of a quake. These data give scientists a means to calculate how far the stations might move in the earth-shaking event.

In testing the idea, the scientists used NASA's satellite-positioning software to analyze data from 38 GPS stations located at varying distances from the Sumatra quake's epicenter. The software pinpoints a station's precise location to within 7 millimeters (0.3 inches).

The team analyzed the data accumulated within 15 minutes of the December 2004 earthquake. Results indicated most of the permanent ground displacements occurred within a few minutes of the arrival of the first seismic waves. Their analysis inferred a 9.0-magnitude quake, very near the earthquake's final calculated size.

"Modeling earthquakes with GPS requires a robust, real-time ability to predict where GPS satellites are in space with exacting precision, which our software does," said

Frank Webb, a JPL geologist. "This technique improves rapid estimates of the true size of great earthquakes and advances real-time tsunami modeling capabilities."

The first predictions of the 2004 quake's magnitude estimated the Sumatra, Indonesia-centered temblor had a magnitude of 8.0. This estimation relied on seismological techniques measuring the first seismic waves recorded, a method that lends itself to underestimation when a quake exceeds a magnitude of 8.5.

The scientists envision using the GPS data in tsunami prediction in addition to seismological measurements of ground movement and ocean buoys, which actually sense the tsunami waves.

The full text (<http://www.unr.edu/news/detail.aspx?id=1732>) of the press release is available on the Web site of the University of Nevada at Reno.

For additional information, see the Washington File four-part series on the Tsunami Early Warning System (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Feb/08-289044.html>).

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Initial Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System Operational

By Cheryl Pellerin
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Eighteen months after the tragic tsunami of December 2004, the entire Indian Ocean region has an initial warning system that can receive and distribute tsunami advisories around the clock.

UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura announced that the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System is up and running as scheduled. He made the announcement in a June 29 address to the Executive Council of UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (UNESCO-IOC).

The Indian Ocean System is a vital component of a global network overseen by the IOC that will include warning systems under development in the northeast Atlantic, Mediterranean and adjoining seas, and the Caribbean. Protection also is being reinforced in the southwest Pacific Ocean and the South China Sea. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2005/Feb/08-289044.html>).)

INTERIM TSUNAMI WARNING

In the meantime, warning systems in place for nations in the Pacific Ocean basin, where more than 85 percent of tsunamis occur, have been notifying the unprotected countries of potentially tsunami-generating earthquakes since just after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

These include two warning systems of the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric

Administration National Weather Service - the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center (PTWC) in Hawaii and the West Coast and Alaska Tsunami Warning Center in Palmer, Alaska.

Until the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, the PTWC served the Pacific Basin as a regional and long-distance tsunami warning center and as a local tsunami warning center for Hawaii.

Currently, it is an interim warning center for the Indian Ocean in cooperation with the Japan Meteorological Agency, which issues bulletins for hazard-related events in the Indian Ocean and the Caribbean until dedicated systems are in place for those regions.

The PTWC is also the operational center for the Tsunami Warning System (TWS) of the Pacific, an international program requiring the participation of many seismic, tide, communication and dissemination facilities operated by most of the nations bordering the Pacific Ocean.

PTWC geophysicists collect and evaluate data provided by participating countries and issue bulletins about major earthquakes and possible or confirmed tsunamis to participants and other nations in or bordering the Pacific Basin.

In May, more than 30 nations participated in the first regionwide test of the TWS, held to exercise each country's lines of communication, review tsunami response procedures and promote emergency preparedness.

Exercise Pacific Wave '06, sponsored by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), began at the PTWC and was the first drill in a series of regular exercises. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eap/Archive/2006/May/22-714651.html>).)

INITIAL INDIAN OCEAN SYSTEM

By the end of July 2006, Matsuura said, the initial Indian Ocean warning system will be able more quickly to detect strong tsunami-genic (tsunami-producing) earthquakes; more precisely locate earthquakes; confirm the presence of a tsunami wave in the ocean after a strong earthquake; issue a tsunami watch, regional watch or global tsunami ocean warning; and call off tsunami watches and regional tsunami watches.

Twenty-six of a possible 28 national tsunami information centers capable of receiving and distributing tsunami advisories around the clock have been set up in Indian Ocean countries.

The seismographic network is improved -- 25 new stations are being deployed and linked in real time to analysis centers -- and three Deep-ocean Assessment and Reporting of Tsunamis (DART) buoys are monitoring the region's waters.

DART buoys are important to tsunami detection because a tsunami is a series of large waves usually produced by sudden, violent undersea disturbances such as earthquakes or landslides.

(Continued on page 20)

Initial Indian Ocean Tsunami . . .

(Continued from page 19)

Once a tsunami is generated, its energy is distributed throughout the water column above the earthquake. Tsunami waves may go unnoticed by ships on the open ocean because they do not rise to great heights until they arrive in shallower waters close to land.

Whether visible to the eye or not, tsunami waves in the deep ocean generate more pressure than the surrounding water, and the DART seafloor sensor can record the increased pressure in the water column as the wave passes by.

DART buoys are the best way to detect the approach of tsunami waves across large bodies of water.

The Commission for the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO) is contributing data from seismographic stations to the Indian Ocean data collection efforts. The CTBTO International Monitoring System has a network of 321 monitoring stations and 16 related laboratories that monitor the Earth for evidence of nuclear explosions in all environments. The system's seismic and other stations monitor the underground, underwater and atmosphere environments, and can be used to detect earthquakes.

NEXT STEPS

For now, information bulletins will be issued from Japan and Hawaii until a final decision is made on the location of regional centers in the Indian Ocean.

"We can be justly proud of having done all this and much more,"

Matsuura said. "However, this successful work is far from being finished. The new systems need to be tested in real situations," and greater capacity building is needed across the board, he said.

Two major challenges exist, Matsuura added. The first is to reinforce international coordination.

"We cannot afford the risk of having a disparate array of national systems with little or no coordination," the UNESCO director-general said. "The open and free exchange of data, and the full interoperability of national systems, is absolutely crucial for success."

The second challenge is to ensure long-term investment in the system, securing the flow of information from the warning centers to populations and communities at risk.

"A timely 100 percent accurate and precise warning will not provide any protection," Matsuura said, "if people do not know how to respond to the emergency. Early warning is as much an issue of soft organizational technology, communication and community-based systems, as it is of 'hard' science and technology, numerical modeling and instrumental networks."

Building national preparedness is the most difficult part of establishing early warning systems, he said.

Progress toward these goals and further system development will be discussed at a meeting of the Intergovernmental Coordination

Group for the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System to be held in Bali, Indonesia, July 31 to August 2.

Additional information (<http://www.prh.noaa.gov/ptwc/>) about the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center is available at the NOAA Web site.

US Tsunami Warning Centers Response Chronology: Tonga Earthquake and Tsunami: http://www.prh.noaa.gov/ptwc/Tonga_Timeline_2006.05.03.pdf

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Iranian Photographer Documents the World

By Michael Jay Friedman & Anita W. Wadhwani
Washington File Staff Writers

Washington -- "I have always used my camera as a weapon to fight against war and injustice," says internationally acclaimed photographer Reza, whose photographs are on display this summer in the National Geographic Society's headquarters in Washington.

Dozens of Reza's works can be viewed inside the society's museum and -- a National Geographic first -- along the portico surrounding the building, accessible to casual passers-by. They depict haunting and often beautiful scenes from the Caspian region, Egypt and other parts of the world.

The photographs, which will be on exhibit until October 9, represent only one aspect of Reza's social commitment. Aina, a nongovernmental organization founded by Reza, works to build and develop a successful civil society through independent media and cultural projects. One of its efforts is Parvaz (meaning "to fly or soar"), a magazine published in both Pashto and Dari and distributed throughout Afghanistan as a teaching resource for young Afghans age 7-12.

"I believe one of the most important things we all have to do is educate children," Reza says."

Reza Deghati was born in 1952, in Tabriz, Iran. An aspiring photographer by the age of 14, he first trained his lens on rural Iranian society, capturing its grievances against the nation's

central authority. The authorities soon took notice, and Reza started signing his work with his first name only. He spent three years in prison under the shah's regime. Later, he documented the Iranian revolution for the French Press Agency and worked as a Middle East correspondent for Newsweek and Time magazines.

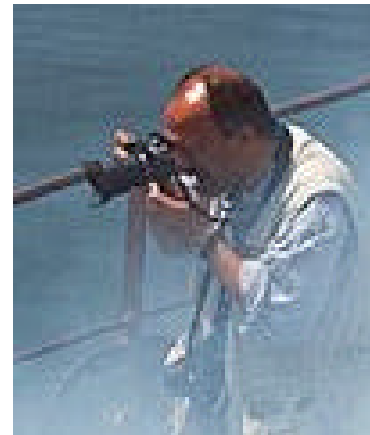
Reza remains in exile from the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In 1989 and 1990, Reza served as a consultant for the United Nations humanitarian program in Afghanistan. He then returned to photography, contributing a number of photographic essays on life in Asia and the Middle East to National Geographic magazine.

Many of Reza's images depict encounters between the traditional and the modern.

An Azeri refugee herding his sheep past abandoned oil plants; a Soviet helicopter and a white bird crossing their paths near the holiest shrine in Mazar-e-Sharif in Afghanistan; Afghan villagers scamper down the rocky banks of the Konar River fleeing Soviet soldiers; two boys from the Islamic Republic of Iran carry the hollowed-out carcass of a television set in Turkish Kurdistan -- these and other works have earned Reza international recognition. In 2005, the French Senate awarded him the title "Chevalier de l' Ordre du Mérite" declaring his photographs "a lesson of solidarity and a lesson of faith in mankind."

Speaking June 23 at the National Geographic Society, Reza described his work as "doing war against war with my pictures."



Photographer Reza
(Photo: National Geographic)

"What I'm trying to explain is that the dignity of the human. The beauty of life is the most important thing that we should always think about. That is what I'm trying to convey in all my images."

More information about the exhibition (<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/museum/exhibitions/reza.html>) is available at the National Geographic Society Web site.

More information (<http://www.ainaworld.org/statiques/en/index.htm?gclid=CNb5p6yk6YUCFQyYHgodOhrjwg>) about Aina is available on its Web site.

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U.S. Exhibit Showcases Australian Aborigine Women's Musings

By Anita Wadhvani
Washington File Staff Writer

Washington -- Through a unique exhibit at the National Museum of Women in the Arts (NMWA) in Washington, aborigine women are showcasing their talents as painters.

Dreaming Their Way: Australian Aboriginal Women Painters connects 33 indigenous women from across Australia to art enthusiasts in the United States through vibrantly colored canvases and bark paintings, each expressed in intricate detail.

Indigenous women are becoming more prominent as contemporary artists in Australia, a nation in which painting has been primarily a man's occupation, according to the NMWA. Through their art, the women convey their relationships to each other, their land and the roles they play in daily life.

The Dreaming -- or Dream-time -- is an integral part of the oral tradition and worldview of indigenous Australians. According to the NMWA, the Dreaming is "the period of creation when the land and life upon it were created by spiritual ancestors who also gave birth to humans, and established the moral code known as the Law."

"For thousands of years, Dreamings were ceremoniously communi-

cated through painting, dance, story-telling, and other artistic expressions thereby creating a strong, living bond between Aboriginal people and their homeland," the NMWA says. "Rendered

and acrylics to represent Dreaming designs in a more permanent form and create art for the public.

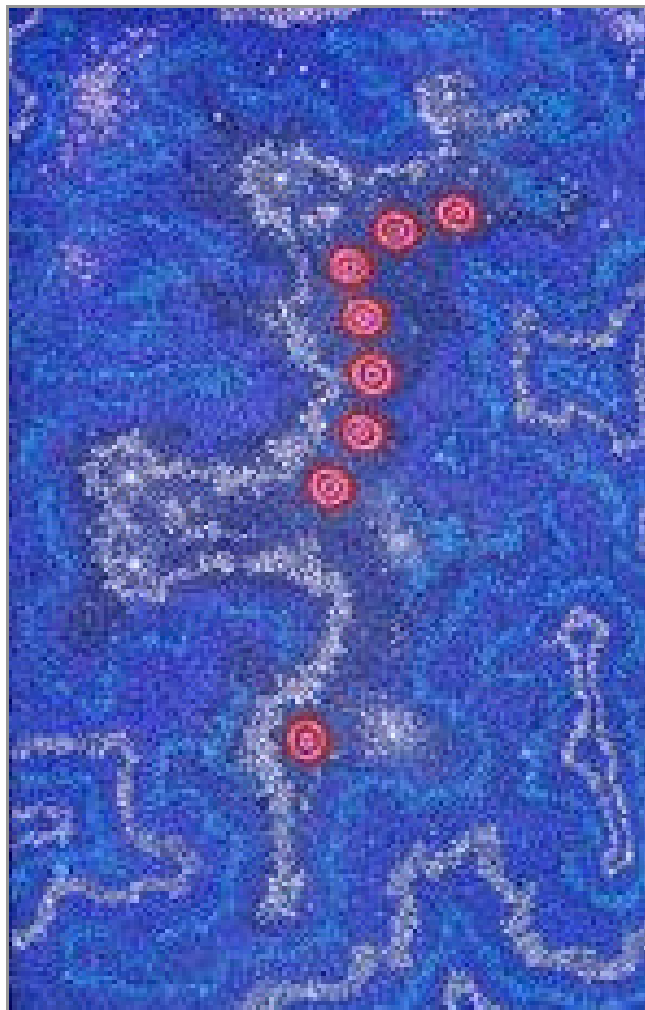
"By using various abstracted techniques and a canon of symbols, artists could commit stories to permanent media, while at the same time obscure sacred designs from the uninitiated public. This new method of communicating Dreamings spread throughout central Australia and now embraces a network of art-producing communities across the country's vast expanse," the NMWA says.

Each of the exhibit's nearly 80 pieces offers insightful meaning once viewers realize what is behind the symbols used. Symbols can represent multiple things such as the elements of the earth, stars, a woman or man and animals.

Some of the paintings offer an aerial view of story elements. In her acrylic-on-canvas piece *Milky Way Seven Sisters Dreaming*, for example, artist Gabriella Possum Nungurrayi interprets the story of seven sisters who try to escape a man by turning themselves into fireballs in the sky as a line of seven

red-and-white circles with a lone red-and-white circle below, all arrayed against a blue-and-white background.

"I think they [the Australian aborigines] are more appreciative of



Milky Way Seven Sisters Dreaming
by Gabriella Possum Nungurrayi
(photo - National Museum of Women in the Arts)

mostly on ephemeral material, these sacred reiterations which connected participants to the Creation Era were intended for private, initiated eyes."

Over the last 30 years, aboriginal artists have begun to use boards

(Continued on page 24)

USDA Opening Offices in Countries . . .

(Continued from page 15)

The disease has spread significantly since March, the report states, as 16 more nations have confirmed the appearance of the H5N1 virus either in wild birds or domestic flocks. Contrary to some expectations, it has not made an appearance in North America.

U.S. international involvement and outreach increased in the first six months of 2006 as government agencies sent U.S. expert teams to the scene of various disease outbreaks. The United States sent specialists to Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Romania, Ukraine, Nigeria and Indonesia in response to the appearance of H5N1.

Top HHS officials have traveled to various international meetings, speaking to officials of other governments to raise awareness about the potential for the outbreak of pandemic influenza and the need for preparedness.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) had a scientist on the ground in Sumatra, Indonesia, when authorities investigated a family cluster of H5N1 in which seven people became ill and six died. Though the case did not mark the emergence of the sustained human-to-human transmission that will be the trigger for a pandemic, the joint international health investigation did reveal a mutation of the virus, which allowed passage of the illness from a son to his father. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/Archive/2006/Jun/21-171792.html>).)

The CDC specialist involved in the team called the case the first evidence that one person caught the virus from another person, and then passed it on to a third person. CDC's Dr. Tim Uyeki, part of the Sumatra investigating team, said the virus passed no further than that third person, and reached a dead end.

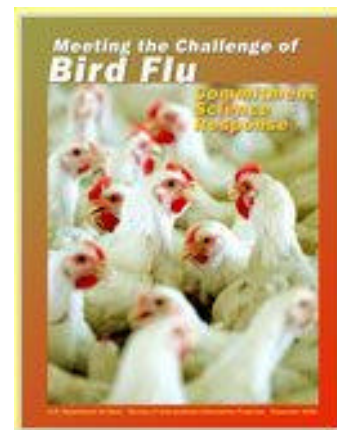
The last few months have brought what the HHS report describes as encouraging news about the success of containment efforts in Vietnam and Thailand. Both countries conducted extensive poultry culling operations after disease outbreaks in both animals and humans 2005. So far in 2006, neither country has reported further human cases, and the disease appears to be successfully contained among animals.

The USDA report (<http://www.usda.gov/documents/PandemicPlanningReport180.pdf>) (PDF, 13 pages) is available on the department's Web site.

The HHS report (<http://www.pandemicflu.gov/plan/pdf/PanfluReport2.pdf>) (PDF, 12 pages) is available on the department Web site

For more information, see Bird Flu (Avian Influenza) (http://usinfo.state.gov/gi/global_issues/bird_flu.html).

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Additional Information on Bird Flu (Avian Influenza)

can be obtained from the below listed U.S. Government Agencies:

Department of Health and Human Services' avian and pandemic flu information:
www.pandemicflu.gov

For USAID's response to Avian influenza: www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/home/News/news_items/avian_influenza.html

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS): www.aphis.usda.gov

U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC): www.cdc.gov/flu/avian/index.htm

National Agricultural Library, U.S. Department of Agriculture: www.nal.usda.gov/awic/aflu/Avian%20Influenza.htm ♦

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U.S. Exhibit Showcases . . .

(Continued from page 22)

people learning about their culture through the artwork," says visiting curator Franchesca Cubillo from the Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory in Darwin, Australia. Cubillo explains that the artwork offers viewers "a small glimpse of their cultural heritage."

The National Museum of Women in the Arts is the only museum in the world dedicated exclusively to recognizing female artists. In its 19 years, the museum has showcased works by more than 800 women artists.

Dreaming Their Way opened at the NMWA June 30 and will run until September 24.

For more information on women's contributions, see Women in the Global Community (http://usinfo.state.gov/dhr/human_rights/women.html). For information on U.S. society and values, see U.S. Life and Culture (http://usinfo.state.gov/scv/life_and_culture.html).

Additional information (<http://www.nmwa.org/exhibition/detail.asp?exhibitid=141>) on the exhibit and the artists is available at the NMWA Web site.

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Rice, G8 Ministers Urge Restraint . . .

(Continued from page 7)

hosted the Moscow meeting. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/Apr/05-805957.html>).)

"It's no secret that the United States and others have had concerns about how the transition is going in Russia," Rice said. "This is, after all, a new democratic transition in its own right. And we have raised those concerns on many occasions and we'll continue to raise them. They're raised in a spirit of respect for the Russian Federation, for how far this society and this country have indeed come."

Rice said she first visited the Soviet Union in 1979 and cited

"massive changes in this country since that time," but added, "we won't hesitate to talk about our concerns about nongovernmental organizations or freedom of the press, and we do so in a spirit of candor and cooperation." (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/eur/Archive/2006/May/09-584205.html>).)

However, she added, "to those who have called for the United States to boycott the G8 process, we're clearly not boycotting it. I'm here, and President Bush, of course, looks forward to coming to the St. Petersburg Summit."

The G8 is "an organization of industrial democracies," Rice said, adding that she considers it appropriate "that we raise any concerns

that we do have about democratic course."

Rice traveled to Moscow from Afghanistan, where she said the United States and international community intend to make a long-term commitment to stability. (See related article (<http://usinfo.state.gov/sa/Archive/2006/Jun/27-465157.html>).)

A transcript (<http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2006/68443.htm>) of the Moscow news conference is posted on the State Department's Web site.

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